

Dear Helen: Deliver us from Evil

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Summary: Another in a continuing series of letters from Mike to his late wife. I don't own em, wish I did. Making no money on this.

Dear Helen: Deliver us from Evil

Mike opened the refrigerator. He really didn't feel like eating, but old habits die hard. It was past eleven pm on Easter Sunday. He and Steve had been called away during dinner, much to Jeannie's dismay. She'd left a note on the kitchen table leading him to the plate of leftovers she'd prepared.

The first thing he saw when he opened the appliance door was the butter lamb*. Just a few hours earlier Steve had laughed at the Easter tradition gracing the holiday dinner table. He had never heard of such a thing, butter molded into the shape of a small seated sheep. Mike explained its significance to Eastern European Christians with equal good humor. But after the events of the day, its peppercorn eyes stared coldly back at him. Now it was just a reminder of innocence slaughtered. He grabbed it off the dish, slammed the door and chucked it in the trash.

The day had started with such promise. Jeannie was home for spring break. They'd gone to church and visited the cemetery before a quiet dinner. Resurrection and joy were the themes for Easter, or they should have been. He opened the cabinet door above the fridge, pulled out a dusty bottle of Seagram's 7 and poured a healthy measure. He really wasn't much of a drinker, but some nights, well, some nights were more difficult than others.

Mike grabbed the yellow legal tablet he had slipped in the cupboard and sat down at the table. After a deep draw from the glass, he began to write.

_Dear Helen, _

Today was one of those days when I question my faith. My faith in God, my faith in humanity and my faith in my ability to continue on as a cop.

The first thing I saw when I went into the house was a smashed chocolate Easter Bunny. It was accompanied by a smattering of green cellophane grass. You know, the kind you used to have to vacuum up for weeks after the holiday. It clung to the chocolate like feathery moss under the deep shade trees in Golden Gate Park.

_Dear God, it was brutal. The death of a child is always heart wrenching, but on Easter Sunday, it was almost too much to take. She was so small, a baby, 2 maybe 3 years old. Dark-haired just like our little girl. She was lying on the living room rug. Blood soaked her pink pinafore and white bonnet. _

It would have looked like she was napping, if not for all the blood. You wouldn't think a body that small could hold so much blood. Sweetheart it nearly ripped my heart out. All I could see was Jeannie in a similar outfit in the not too distant past. The ME took the body out quickly, but it was too late. Just another horror I will never, ever forget. It was all I could do to keep what little dinner I managed to eat before the call where it belonged.

The whole thing went down really quick. The father gave up the kitchen knife without a fight and Steve took him out of the house. He had freely admitted his culpability, claiming the child was possessed and needed to be sacrificed like the lamb. The little girl's mother sat on the couch, rocking and sobbing. I couldn't help her. I had to turn and walk out. I don't think there are enough doctors in the world to figure out what would drive a man take the life of his own child and at this moment, I don't even care. I just want to forget.

Mike put down the pen and closed his eyes, brushing back the tears moistening his lashes. He took another drink from the glass. The amber liquid burned all the way down to his stomach. He wished it would burn the image of the little victim from his brain, but knew it was wishful thinking. He picked up his pen and continued to write.

_Why? Why would a merciful and loving God allow things like this to happen? I know all the rational from the Bible and the Baltimore Catechism. But right now, none of it makes sense. This was nothing but pure evil, so dark it sucked the light and warmth from your soul.

_

You should have seen their faces, the patrolmen. They were old time warriors, both of them, been around as long as me, but they looked haunted, crushed. I guess it's a good thing I didn't get a look at my own ugly mug. And Steve, he was devastated, he didn't say two words on the way home. I forget sometimes how young he is. Still enthusiastic and idealistic, he tries so hard to see the good in everybody. This is really going to shake him. I asked him to come back here with me, so we could talk it out, but he just wanted to go home and I'm worried. Nobody should be alone after a horror show like that. What is this going to do to him?

Maybe I'm just getting old, but I don't know how many more times I can see something like this and still have the will to

The pen Mike was using chose that moment to give up. He scribbled in the margin of the tablet to no avail, cursing and pitching it in the general direction of the trash can. He looked at the half finished drink, intending to down it in one but walked over to the sink, dumped the balance and rinsed the glass. It never really helped anyhow.

Mike pulled open the junk drawer by the fridge and rooted around for another pen, but as was typical, when you really needed one, none were around. He slammed the drawer home in disgust and grabbed the tablet and turned off the light. He was pretty sure there was something to write with in the drawer of his bed side table.

After climbing the stairs, he dropped the tablet on the bed and opened the drawer of his nightstand. No pens. It was like the house itself was conspiring against him. He unconsciously walked around to the other side of the bed, pulled open the drawer of the matching nightstand and froze.

Mike desperately tried to recall if he had opened that drawer since his wife had passed. The drawer in Helen's nightstand. It was something so easily overlooked. He stood paralyzed, wanting and not wanting to look in the drawer.

Finally shaking himself free from indecision, he looked inside. On top, there were several linen handkerchiefs with lace edges. When he pulled them out, the scent from an old lavender sachet drifted up, filling the room and his memory. He held the white fabric to his face and drank in the smell he would always associate with her.

He glanced back in the drawer and a metallic glint caught his eye. He reached in and pulled out a silver chain that bore a small round medallion. It was something he thought he had lost years ago. As Mike stared at the image of the angel with the raised sword, old, well-rehearsed words filled his mind and left his lips.

_St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.
>Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the
Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
>and do thou,
O Prince of the heavenly hosts,
>by the power of God,
thrust into hell Satan,
>and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world
>seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.**

He wept. Helen had bought this for him when they were first married. St. Michael the Archangel, patron of policemen and soldiers, his patron. She told him it would protect him and that he too was continuing the work of the angelic Michael, protecting the citizens of San Francisco from evil. She had recited that prayer every night for him. He could not believe that he had forgotten.

He stood for a long time clutching the medal in his hand, considering the words of the Prayer to St. Michael. When he looked into the drawer he saw Helen's favorite fountain pen. He picked it up and sat down on the bed, surprised that the pen sprang to life after a few tentative scratches on the tablet. He crossed out the last two lines he had written and wrote one more.

_ I won't forget again. All my love, Mike_

Mike folded over the tablet, laid it next to the bed with the fountain pen on top and smiled. He picked up the chain and was about to put the medal around his neck when he had an idea. He dropped it into his pocket, trotted down the steps and grabbed his car keys.

*The butter lamb is an Easter tradition in Poland, Russia and many of the Slavic countries and with immigrants from those countries. It is butter, hand formed or pressed into a mold in the shape of a seated lamb. It has peppercorns for eyes and usually bears a pennant in white with a red cross. It represents the risen "Lamb of God."

** Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

End
file.